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Misapprehensions by All in the Past.

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PASTOR RUSSELL

August 16.—The Photo-Drama of Creation appears to be the Bible Story, simply told and wonderfully illustrated by perhaps the most beautiful aggregation of Bible pictures ever presented. The object of the Drama is declared to be the re-establishment of faith in the Bible. Manifestly it is well adapted to this end. Few can witness it without deeper reverence for God and great personal benefit.

Pastor Russell's text today was, "When Christ *** shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."—Colossians 3:4.

The Pastor began by showing how foolish and unscriptural were many of the suggestions handed down from the Dark Ages respecting the object and the manner of Christ's Second Advent. The Bible declaration that our Redeemer would come again and receive His faithful people to Himself was once surmised to imply that all the remainder of mankind would experience eternal torture. But now, in the blessed enlightenment of our day, we see that the gathering of the Church in the First Resurrection is merely the completing of the Seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:16, 29), whose work thenceforth will be the blessing of all the families of the earth, according to the Divine Promise and Oath.

The declaration that at our Lord's Second Coming He will judge the world in righteousness, we once misunderstood to mean that the Redeemer would merely confirm a judgment, or decree, of eternal torment against mankind, the speaker asserted. He then briefly outlined the Divine Plan for human salvation from the sin and death conditions brought upon the race through Adam's disobedience and extended as a judgment to all his posterity. He showed that since "Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man," Adam and all his race would have another trial for life—individually, however. This new trial has been delayed until the Church class is tried and qualified to be the world's judges during its trial—during the 1,000 years of Messiah's Kingdom.

The Pastor explained that in this trial right and wrong, truth and error, will be set before mankind with the full explanation that whoever chooses sin will choose the Second Death, but that whoever chooses righteousness will choose life everlasting. He then contrasted this Scriptural view of the Judgment Day with that handed down from the Dark Ages—a twenty-four-hour day for damning afresh the poor race already suffering from the original condemnation.

How Christ Will Come.

Next was pointed out the unreasonableness of the misapplied theories respecting Christ's Coming received from a darker time. According to these, the Redeemer would come again in the flesh, the only glory of which would be a shining sign. The speaker then quoted Scripture after Scripture to prove that our Lord was put to death in the flesh, but was raised from the dead a spirit being. Our Lord's flesh was given for the life of the world; and all His human rights will in due time be given to humanity.

It was also shown that since the Scriptures declare that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God," the Church must be clothed by the power of the First Resurrection—mid-spirit beings like our glorified Redeemer, when they shall see no more.

Misconceptions respecting our Lord's condition have blinded our minds regarding the manner of His Second Coming. The Pastor declared, "Coming of Him as a fleshly being, we were unable to comprehend the Scriptures, telling of His Parousia (presence)—the end of this Gospel Age and of its twofold work then to be accomplished: first, a separating work in His Church, unseen and unknown by the world; second, a manifestation to mankind, not in flesh, but 'in flaming fire'."

Parousia and Epiphania.

The speaker then discussed at length two words used in the Greek MSS. reference to our Lord's Second Coming. He said that our English translation beclouds their significance. Christ's Parousia, presence, was shown to refer to a period when, "as a thief in the night," unknown to the world He will judge His Church, giving reward to the faithful. This includes the resurrection of the dead saints and the change of the living ones.

After the Church has been glorified, the Epiphania, or shining forth of the Lord in glory, will take place. This will mean a sudden blazing forth of God's righteous indignation against all unrighteousness. Severely awful as these judgments will be, nevertheless they will manifest the Love of God. By the fire of that tribulation mankind will be uplifted and blessed.

"SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN IN HEAVEN"

"Then All the Tribes of the Earth Shall Mourn."

The Character of the Sign—Its Effect Upon the Whole World—Why Mourn, if Messiah's Kingdom Brings Blessings—The Day of Trouble a Plowshare to Prepare the Hearts of Mankind—This Severity Is in Mercy Designed to Prepare For Blessing.



PASTOR RUSSELL

August 23.—The beauty and instructiveness of The Photo-Drama of Creation are more and more appreciated by the public as time passes. This wonderful combination of Biblical illustrations completely outlines the Scriptures and lays a good foundation for intelligent Bible study.

Pastor Russell's topic today was from the text, "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."—Matthew 24:30.

The speaker pointed out various suggestions made by scholars respecting the import of this prophesy—some guessing that the sign would be a cross in the sky; others, that it would be Christ Himself, appearing in some wrathful form to humanity, causing dismay, etc. He reminded that his audience had read published reports of his recent sermon respecting Christ's Second Coming in its two phases—the Parousia, or invisible presence, followed by the Epiphania, or bright-shining in flaming fire, or judgment. He could not say that the Sign of the Son of Man would be His Parousia; for Christ's Parousia will not be known except to the most saintly of His Church. Consequently it must stand related to His Epiphania, or shining forth in judgments, which the whole world will recognize.

The hearers were reminded that a sign is never an indication; for instance, a cross is a sign of mourning; the cross represents Christianity, the crescent Mohammedanism. So the sign of the Son of Man in heaven would properly be some indication that He has taken His great power and begun to reign.

Mourning Because of Him.

To the question, How could such a sign appear in the sky, the heavens? the Pastor replied that this is not the thought. He reminded his audience that the Bible repeatedly uses the words heaven, earth, mountain, sea, in a symbolic sense; the earth representing organized society, mountains representing kingdoms, seas the restless classes of humanity. Then he showed that in the same symbolic usage the heavens represent ecclesiastical powers—churchianity. The sign in the heavens, he believes, signifies that the flaming fire of judgments will first manifest itself in ecclesiastical circles.

Gradually mankind will realize that a new government is in control, and that justice will be laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet. Since unrighteousness is everywhere prevalent because of man's fallen condition, the consciences of the whole world will be awakened, the speaker declared. Fear will come upon men everywhere, not only because they will see Christ's righteous judgments in religious circles, but because they will see Him coming and will recognize that shortly they, too, must be involved.

The Pastor reminded his audience that mankind have very crude and incorrect views of the object of Messiah's Second Coming and Kingdom. "Doctrines of devils," brought into the creeds during the Dark Ages, have made so void the Word of God that the majority of mankind dread God as their Atrocious Foe, instead of realizing Him to be the Father of mercies. Not knowing of the glorious blessings which the Kingdom will bring mankind, they will be apprehensive as they perceive Christ's righteous judgments encircling the earth.

"The Heavens Being on Fire."

Next was discussed at length St. Peter's words, "The heavens being on fire," and "the earth and the works thereof will be burned up." These the Pastor believes describe the sign of the Son of Man. He warned his hearers against making the mistake of our forefathers in supposing that these words refer to a literal burning of the literal earth and sky, and explained that while the symbolic heavens and earth will catch "fire" and pass away with a great commotion, the physical earth will remain practically as it is, and begin to undergo the transforming influences of Reformation.

The speaker then demonstrated that the flaming fire of Divine judgments will appear in the heavens—ecclesiastical—and subsequently reach the earth, purifying society from every-thing sinful, selfish, unjust, and preparing men's hearts for Divine blessings. "The elements will melt with fervent heat." We see the capitalistic and the laboring element separating. We see preparations for the great Time of Trouble. Things are getting so hot that presently spontaneous combustion will set in, and clear the way for Messiah's Kingdom.

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